



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PARADISE AND THE FIRST SIN. GENESIS III.

By WILLIAM R. HARPER,
The University of Chicago.

Principles already adopted.—The general relation of the story.—The more significant expressions.—The structure of the story.—The important teachings.—The general purpose of the story.—Similar material in other literatures.—Our estimate of the biblical story.

In our examination of the biblical stories of Creation certain principles were accepted. These, briefly stated, were the following :

(1) That the Hexateuch, which furnishes us the immediate material for our investigation, is a part of a special divine revelation.

(2) That this revelation, according to its own testimony, was given gradually, in an accommodated form, being thus adjusted to the needs and capabilities of the people to whom it first came.

(3) That of necessity the limitations of one kind and another were marked and numerous ; the material being, in the nature of the case, in many respects imperfect.

(4) That according to the claims of the Bible itself, we are to expect in it moral and religious truth, not historical or scientific truth.

(5) That the literary form in which this portion of the divine revelation now appears is a compilation of four distinct documents, no one of which goes farther back than 950 B. C.; it being maintained, however, that the essence of the material is Mosaic in its origin ; that it is all the outgrowth of Mosaic material, and that it everywhere breathes the Mosaic spirit.

It was agreed, therefore, that the material which forms the basis of our work is in form neither a scientific treatise nor a historical record. It has taken on the form of religious stories of which the historical element furnishes the basis, the prophetic or

religious purpose furnishing the form and coloring. It is safe to say that the material was never intended to be understood in any other way by the writer, or by the Spirit that directed the writer in gathering it together. It follows, therefore, that the literalizing method which, by its misconceptions, has almost destroyed the value of the material, leads, for the most part, to a misinterpretation.

In anticipation, a few statements may be made concerning the relation of the story now under consideration, "Paradise and the First Sin," to history, religion, and theology. While in a true sense prehistoric, we may well call this event, or combination of events—whichever it was—the *beginning of history*, that to which all history points back; but also the *foundation of history*, that upon which all history rests. There is a sense, too, in which it might be said to be the *shaper of history*. If we may use a rough figure, it is not simply the fountain, the head of the stream, but an undercurrent directing and influencing the stream throughout all its progress. This story, whether false or true, whether a fancy of the brain or a real substantial fact, is the key-note to the understanding of the world's religions. But even if criticism could show that its representations concerning the first estate of man are wholly false, it remains that this story gives us the starting-point of religion, contains an epitome of all religious as well as irreligious life, and even furnishes us the goal of all religious thought. If this be true of the religions of the world, it is true in the strictest sense of Judaism and Christianity. A fundamental truth of the Bible is that sin entered the world

¹Some of the literature bearing upon this subject is as follows: *Dods*, Genesis; *Kalisch*, Genesis; *Dillmann*, Die Genesis; *Delitzsch (Franz)*, Genesis; *Lenormant*, Beginnings of History, chapters 2 and 3; *Schrader*, The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament; *Briggs*, The Hebrew Poem of the First Sin, in *Reformed Quarterly Review*, 1885; *Delitzsch (Fr'd)* Wo lag das Paradies? *Francis Brown*, A Recent Theory of the Garden of Eden, in *Old Testament Student*, Volume V., September, 1884; *S. I. Curtiss*, Symposium on the Antediluvian Narratives, Bib. Sac., 1883; *W. H. Ward*, The Serpent Tempter in Oriental Mythology, Bib. Sac., 1881; *Harper and Green*, The Pentateuchal Question, Genesis i-xii, *Hebraica*, Volume V.; *Ewald*, History of Israel, Volume I., pp. 256 ff; *Baudissin*, Studien zur Semitischen Religionsgeschichte, Volume II.; *Geikie*, Hours with the Bible, Volume I., chapters 7, 8, etc.; *Schultz*, Old Testament Theology, Volume I.

through Adam. He committed the sin which was the "root of all sins." Delitzsch¹ has said concerning the narrative of the Fall: "It is not a point of greatest importance whether we understand it literally or symbolically, but whether we consider the event which rendered redemption necessary a historical fact or not. The externality of that which is related conceals realities whose recognition is not cut short by a symbolical or even mythical interpretation. Christianity as the religion of redemption stands or falls with the recognition of the historical character of the Fall."

Among the more *significant expressions* the following may be noted:

1. The garden planted (2:8) suggests a park filled with trees, such a park as, in Oriental countries, is connected with royal residences.

2. Eden (2:8) is not a word meaning *pleasure*, thus describing the character of the place, nor does it signify a *permanent dwelling*, but rather, as in Assyrian, a *district* or *field*.

3. Concerning the trees planted in the garden (2:9) it is to be noted that every plant of the soil was included which would delight the senses. Special attention, however, is called to the "tree of Life," representing immortality—called such because of the prohibition connected with it. Will man obey? He may remain near to God and live. Will he disobey? He must be banished from God and die. There is also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A choice is given to man, and by self-command and obedience he is expected to attain his moral growth. To do good when there is no chance to sin is no virtue.

4. A river is represented as passing through the garden and then separating into four great streams. Of these four streams two are without doubt the Euphrates and the Tigris. The Pishon (2:11) has been thought to be the Pallakopas canal (Delitzsch), the Upper Indus (Lenormant), the Indus (Kalisch), the Nile (Rabbinical writers), the Danube (Ephraem Syrus), the Ganges (Josephus, the Fathers, etc.). The Gihon has been

¹ Genesis, *in loc.*

thought to be the Shatt-en-nil canal (Delitzsch), the Oxus (Lenormant), the Nile (Josephus, the Fathers, Gesenius, Kalisch, and others). It may be asked whether the writer is describing a geographical situation in existence before the deluge, but obliterated at the time of the deluge. The fact that so many hypotheses have been introduced to explain the location of Paradise is evidence of one of three things: either (1) the writer intentionally furnishes an indefinite and unsatisfactory description in order that men should not be able to locate the place; or (2) the geographical characteristics have been obliterated by the deluge, and consequently are of no value from the point of view of the present condition of things; or (3) the description is to be taken as an ideal description, and the details are not to be examined too closely.

5. The tree of which the eating is prohibited (2:17) is represented as a literal tree, seemingly with medicinal qualities, the writer obtaining from the traditions common to the whole world this form with which to clothe his ideas. The eating of it will bring death. This seems to be physical rather than spiritual death. In answer to the question, "Why God creates man if he is so soon to die?" the teaching would seem to be that man, not God, is responsible for death. Disobedience introduces the germ of death.

6. Two interpretations have been given the words of 3:15: (1) The bruising of the head indicates a fatal result; that of the heel temporary harm. Or, (2) according to others, the warfare will be conducted openly on the one hand, and on the other by insidious attack.

7. The judgment pronounced upon the woman (3:16) is three-fold, including the pain of childbirth, the continued desire, and subordination to her husband. It is impossible not to ask one's self the question how far this representation is a picture of woman among the Hebrews.

8. If we interpret 3:20 closely, we must suppose that the naming of the woman is by anticipation, for although her name implies that she is the mother of all living, no child has yet been born.

9. The use of skins for garments (3:21) raises the question, Did animals die in Paradise? Or is there anything which would lead us to suppose that animal death entered after the Fall? Other expressions will be taken up in connection with the teachings of the passage.

The *structure* of this chapter in connection with the introduction found in chapter 2 is very interesting:

1. In the beginning the earth is a waste, there being no rain, no man (2:4-6).

2. A mist ascends and waters the earth; man is created (2:7).

3. The garden is planted; its name, contents and situation are given (2:8-14).

4. Man is placed in the garden; woman is created; a state of innocence (2:15-25).

5. The woman is seduced by the serpent; she in turn seduces the man (3:1-7).

6. The culprits are summoned to trial (3:8-13).

7. The sentence is pronounced upon the serpent, the man, and the woman (3:14-19).

8. The woman is named; man and woman are clothed (3:20, 21).

9. The sentence is executed; they are banished from the garden (3:22-24).

The style is a continuation of that of the second chapter, being free and flowing, picturesque and poetical, and anthropomorphic. Although the chapter is poetical throughout, it is not a poem.

In an effort to discover the *teachings* of so important a passage, it must be kept in mind that only a few may be indicated, and that in the statement of these we must limit ourselves to those teachings which the writer himself intended to present, or to those which are plainly involved in the statements of the writer. It would be a much easier task to suggest the teachings which in one's opinion the writer ought to have furnished. This, however, is not the work before us.

1. *The origin and first state of man and woman.*—The earth was an arid waste. Rain is sent and man is created; then the

situation changes. Man in his loneliness requires a being who will respond to his emotion. It is proposed to give him a help. The animals are first created. They are without question a "help" to him. A relationship exists between him and them. There is peace everywhere. Man shows his superiority in giving them names. Here begins human speech. "The animals congregate; they are living creatures like himself; they are in a sense a help, but not such a help as is meet for man—a human soul, a help which satisfies the longing heart and calms the craving mind."¹ So God creates woman. They were naked but not ashamed. The idea of good and evil is not yet known. There is no thought of shame. Why should there be?

2. *The garden in Eden.*—There are many conflicting opinions in reference to the location of Eden. It is possible that the writer of the narrative knew the situation and described it accurately, while the description is not now understood because of geological changes. It is perfectly clear that no man can locate the district from the statements here given. If this writer did know the location, he alone of his contemporaries, and of those who followed him, may be credited with the knowledge. It is a question whether the Israelites knew more of geography than of geology. They had the opinions of the nations about them, and it was a "general belief that Arabia, India, Eastern Africa were connected by a continent in such a manner that a great ocean bordering on these countries formed one unbroken plain of waves." It was supposed that through these continents the Indus took its way to Africa and appeared as the Nile. When we recall that Alexander the Great regarded the Indus and the Nile as one; that the Ionian philosophers believed the earth to be a disc encircled by the ocean; that in A. D. 1486 Columbus was denounced as a heretic because of certain geographical opinions, one may reasonably ask why better views should be expected of the Israelites. It seems better, therefore, to regard the description as ideal. Man had his first home in a great park in the district of Eden. Here was to be found everything desirable for use or for ornamentation. It was situated, of course, where

¹ Kalisch, *in loc.*

rivers flowed, for without rivers a land is a dreary waste. It is the center from which these rivers go forth to the principal parts of the earth : the Indus to the east, the Nile to the south, the Tigris north, and the Euphrates west. The situation is near the place whence came the great ancestor Abraham. In every respect, therefore, the picture is an ideal one, and we waste time in endeavoring to find the exact location. In the form of this picture momentous ideals are embodied.

3. *The serpent*.—Here, as elsewhere among nations, the serpent is the emblem of evil, and there is no word in the story to indicate that the tempter is other than an animal. It is not to be forgotten in this connection that the serpent among many nations represented also that which was beneficent. His subtlety is compared with that of other beasts of the field. The punishment pronounced upon him is appropriate only for a beast or serpent. It was because the case seemed too serious, the conflict too great, that men, as the centuries passed, introduced into this primitive story the interpretation now commonly accepted of “that old serpent, the devil.” The writer is living at an age when the idea of Satan has not been developed. We must be careful, therefore, not to find too much meaning in these words. Some would maintain that the story is intended simply to explain the enmity existing between man and the serpent order ; or, perhaps, the existence of so horrid an animal in the creation of God which has been pronounced good. Could God have originally produced so hideous an object ? Is it to be understood that this serpent was not a part of the original creation, and that it is what it is because of the part it took in the seduction of the woman ? There is probably some truth in these explanations, but they fall far short of presenting the entire truth. It seems quite certain that the serpent, according to our writer, was something different in the beginning from what he is in the writer’s times. Now he creeps upon his belly. Before this time—is this a legitimate inference ?—he walked upright. In any case the serpent takes the woman unawares. He insinuates distrust in God ; suggests a means of growth and enjoyment, “an enlargement of experience”—and the deed is done. Is he treated in

the chapter as a moral being? Held responsible for conduct? But the serpent of today, according to the writer, is not what the serpent originally was.

4. *The nature and purpose of the temptation.*—The word “trial” should always be used instead of “temptation.” To grow morally one must exercise self-restraint. The purpose of this trial was to develop and educate man. It is clear that the serpent, who is permitted to approach the woman in her innocence, is under the power of God. The event is, therefore, one which God permitted. It was a test which man might have stood, which he had been educated to stand; but one for which, as a matter of fact, he was not equal. The whole transaction was a trial, under God, of man’s strength of character.

5. *The character of the transgression.*—It was a simple case of wilful disobedience. When once performed, sin has entered the world. The step of God annoys and frightens the man; he hides; answers timidly; makes excuses; blames the woman, and God for giving her. The woman, equally afraid, places the blame upon the serpent.

6. *The punishment of the serpent.*—This is three-fold. Henceforth it shall be the most cursed of all beasts; shall go upon its belly, and, as a consequence, eat dust; and eternal enmity shall exist between its race and that of man. How far is the form of the story an explanation of the antipathy between the serpent and the human race? How far does the statement contain the germ of the great teaching of the world’s history—man’s struggle with sin and his final victory?

7. *The punishment of the woman.*—If we recall the frequent cry of pain and anguish ascribed by biblical writers to women in travail, the literal meaning of the word for travail, the not seldom fatal issue—in all climes and countries; if we recall the reproach of childlessness in biblical times, the stories of Sarah and Hannah, and others, Isaiah’s picture of seven women taking hold of one man; if we recall the inferior position of women of the Hebrew nation, a position lower than among the Egyptians among whom Israel dwelt so long,—the meaning of the text becomes much clearer. “I will greatly multiply thy

sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." Today, in civilized countries, perhaps only the pain of childbirth remains of the original terrible form of punishment which included also the overwhelming disgrace of childlessness and entire subjection to the husband.

8. *The punishment of the man.*—The work given man to do in paradise was "easy, congenial, remunerative." Henceforth it shall be done in pain, "in sorrow shalt thou eat of it." It will be disappointing; "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth." It will be wearisome; done in the "sweat of thy face," and life-long, continuing until "thou return into the ground." This, according to our writer, constituted the fall, the increase of knowledge being the increase of sorrow. There seems no good reason for not regarding it also as an elevation, "the increase of sorrow being increase of knowledge."

9. *The origin of the human race.*—The woman is called Eve because she is the mother of all living. The doctrine is definite that the human race has descended from a single pair.

10. *The origin of dress.*—The first garments worn by man were coats made by God himself from the skins of animals.

11. *The origin of suffering.*—The writer sees suffering on every side. He teaches that man alone is responsible for it. God, to be sure, permitted it, but man transgressed a distinct command of God, and ever since he has been suffering and dying.

What, now, may we conceive to be the *general purpose* of the story? Place side by side the beautiful home prepared for man, the partner provided, the ideal life of innocence in which they lived together, and the trial, the fall, the punishment and banishment from God's presence and from life—and it is easy to see that our writer is endeavoring to explain the presence in the world of sin and suffering. If we read farther we shall find that every story in the large collection made by this writer has in view the same purpose, and is based upon the narrative of this chapter.

The material connected with the subject of this story *found in other literatures* is very full and significant. It is manifestly

impossible here to present it in detail. The reader is referred to the literature already cited. It is worth our while, however, briefly to classify this outside material according to its bearing upon special subjects. Here again we must make selections, and must treat the topics selected with the utmost brevity.

1. *The first state of innocence.*—The varied forms of the story all point to a time when man was perfect. This time may have been antecedent to the age of man. The place may have been heaven. God may have been ruling upon the earth, or, as in many cases, it was the first man and the first woman. In this state there was no labor, no disease, no death ; there was no sin, no sensual longing, no covetousness. Purity reigned in thought, word and action. This is the golden age of Hesiod, the Egyptian reign of Ra, the Chinese age of Perfection, the first of the four Hindu ages, the Zoroastrian account of earliest man. The biblical representation is not unique. The place has many common features. It was the garden of the Hesperides guarded by the ever watchful serpent far away beyond the pillars of Hercules, or the sacred Mt. Meru of the Hindus guarded by dragons, adorned with trees and plants and watered by four rivers ; or, the Heden of the Persians, a region of bliss and traversed by great rivers, the first home of man before the serpent tempted him to taste of the forbidden tree ; or, the Chinese garden “near the gate of heaven, where were pleasant winds, abundant springs, one the fountain of life, delightful trees, one with the power of preserving life.”

2. *The change from the original state.*—With equal unanimity the world's traditions record a fall from this first state. The occasion of the change is in every case the same. The details of the change are in many cases the same. The state after the change is always the same,—the condition of pain, labor, sorrow, suffering, sickness, death.

3. *The tree of life.*—Here we may compare the Homa tree of the Persians, growing at the spring Ardisura which comes from the throne of God ; the Kalpasoma tree of the Hindus which furnished the water of immortality ; the libation of the gods ; the Tuba tree of the Arab ; the Lotus tree of the Greeks ; the tree

on Assyrian sculpture adorned by royal figures and guarded by genii, just as in our story it is guarded by the cherubim. Is the tree of knowledge a definite tree in the Hebrew narrative? Different opinions exist, and likewise in other nations sometimes the trees are represented separately and sometimes as one tree. With the tree of knowledge we may compare the large part played by trees in Chaldean magic; the burning bush from which God's angel appeared to Moses, the Oak of the Diviners at Shechem, the palm tree under which Deborah prophesied, the oak of Ophrah where an angel appeared to Gideon; the rustling in the tops of the balsam trees which indicated to David that God had gone on before him in the battle; the prophetic trees of the Arabs, the "tree of light" of the Assyrian, the laurel tree of Delos, the tree of Delphis.

4. *The serpent*.—Reference has already been made to the double and contradictory ideas connected with the serpent. Among the Assyrians the serpent was the enemy of the gods. The Ophion of the Phœnician was precipitated into Tartarus by Cronos; Angromainyus in the Persian story having endeavored to corrupt heaven then leaps upon the earth in the form of a serpent, fights with Mithra, but one day will be overcome. In the Vedas the serpent myth is naturalistic, having to do with atmospheric phenomena. Indra (the luminous sky) fights Ahi, or Vritra, the storm cloud, and when the cloud is torn asunder, rain falls. This idea is at the basis of the representation in Job 26:13. Among the Egyptians the serpent Apap represents the darkness which every day conquers the sun, but which is destroyed every morning by the new sun. There seem then to have been three distinct ideas represented by the serpent from the point of view of evil, namely, the darkness of the night as against the sun, the darkness of the storm cloud as against the luminous sky, the idea of evil as against good.

5. *The cherubim*.—Ezekiel's cherubim were bulls (Ezek. 1:10-14). They were the winged bulls with human heads seen at the gates of the palace of the Assyrian kings. These bulls were angels or powers appointed to guard the temple or palace. The cherub of the Exodus was not so highly developed. Wherever

we meet them they are found to be figures containing different elements borrowed from the animal kingdom. There is great variation in the representation, but everywhere they are emblems of the divine attributes.

6. *The flaming sword*.—This, if we accept Lenormant's view,¹ is in name and fact the old Assyrian Littu, "a disc with sharp edges, and a hollow center through which the tips of the fingers pass, whence seven divergent rays issue toward a circumference about which are studded fifty heads or sharp points."

A minute comparison would show much that cannot be presented in a *general comparison*. We must be satisfied, at this time, with the latter. It will be agreed that the outside material is everywhere polytheistic or pantheistic, extravagant and ridiculous, lacking in sublimity, without religious spirit, containing no religious teaching, devoid of principle, purpose, everywhere connected with nature-worship; in the fullest sense mythical. On the other hand, the Hebrew story is throughout (1) monotheistic, or, at all events, monolatristic; (2) simple and pure, intended for the youngest as well as for the oldest, without any of the excessive extravagance found elsewhere, delicately and beautifully expressed; (3) uplifting and stimulating. How do Greek and Roman poets teach men what to be and in what manner to live? By pointing backwards to the golden age. But at the close of this age the gods forsook man, and ever since he has been deteriorating. No note is given as to how this past state may be regained; but in our biblical story man is pointed to the future; he is lifted up and shown a time when peace and health will again be his; (4) abounding in religious feeling and spirit; (5) rich in religious teaching, for the first time apprehended by our writer; (6) characterized by a definite purpose which shows itself in every detail—to teach that man is suffering because of sin, and that in the conflict he is sure to gain the victory; (7) without the shadow of a mythical idea. We may grant that the form is connected with the form of myths, but the idea is so different and so far beyond that of the myths themselves as to take away every vestige of excuse for calling this story a myth.

¹ Beginnings of History, page 142.

In conclusion, what shall we now say concerning the story as a whole ?

1. What was said concerning the first chapter holds good here. The writer was ignorant of the real geographical and historical facts. It was not a part of the divine plan to reveal geography and history. The writer teaches that there was a place from which mankind came forth ; that man was originally perfect ; that he sinned, and that today he suffers. It would be possible to convey these truths in many ways. He takes the stories common to all ancient nations. He has no thought of geography or history. He asks simply, How can I best impress these truths upon the minds of men ? He does what the prophet always does ; he idealizes. There is here no history, no geography.

2. The story is prophetic in the wide and in the narrow sense. Wilful disobedience, discontent, suspicion and lack of gratitude, a slight turning from the path of rectitude, followed by dire consequences—all this and much more the story illustrates as no page of the world's history illustrates so well. It is a picture into which every man may look and see himself, and shudder at the terrible cost of sin. It is the greatest sermon ever preached to man as a warning against sin ; a sermon which millions have read and millions more will read ; a sermon which will never cease to be read so long as man is man and God is God. But there is also here a promise ; a prediction of a time when man will conquer his great enemy, sin ; when light will once more take the place of night ; peace, the place of war ; life, eternal life, the place of death ; the seed of the woman shall eventually gain the victory. This promise is vague. To those to whom it was first given, it must have been very vague indeed ; but those to whom it is permitted to look back upon this struggle of so many thousand years may clearly see, in spite of its vagueness, the germ which has grown, under the fostering care of the God who guided this strange history and this strange people, into Christ the Lord.